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## THE FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS OF BUDDHISM.\*

OUR Lord, the Buddha, was born in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of King Shan of the Chow dynasty of China, and entered the state of Nirvana in the fifty-third year of the reign of King Boku, of the same dynasty. He appeared in the world to open in men the wisdom and perception of Buddahood. And as the dispositions of men are various, so His teachings are various; such as, lesser and greater, partial and complete, temporal and eternal.

The Lord Buddha had no greater object in view than to bring before men the highest teaching, which is that of the sure and speedy means of the One Vehicle of salvation, and to cause them to see and to enter into His wisdom and perception. Thus it came to pass, that in the third week of His own enlightenment, He preached the Avatamsaka Sutra, which is the chief wheel of His law, and to which His other teachings point.

In one scripture He says: "How wondrous! All men can have the wisdom and virtues of Tathagata." And in another He says: "When a Bodhisatva† attains to enlightenment, and sees the true

<sup>\*</sup>Translated by K. Ohara and revised by Philangi Dasa. The author, the Rev. Mr. Ashitsu, of Hieisan, Omi, Japan, a priest of the Tendai sect, attended the Parliament of Religions at Chicago during the World's Fair. He returned to Japan shortly afterwards, leaving the manuscript of this article in our possession. We have deemed it best to preserve the translator's spelling of names and to tamper with the text as little as possible. We have omitted only two or three unimportant lines which were unintelligible or at least doubtful, and added a few footnotes which are intended for those not familiar with Buddhistic terms.—Editor.

<sup>†</sup> Bodhisatva is one who will soon become a Buddha.—Ed.

state of all things, He finds that even herbs, trees, lands, and the earth itself, have attained to the state of Buddahood."

The Buddha opened the Avatamsaka Sutra, which is the doctrine of the sure and speedy means by which all men may attain to Tathagata's wisdom and virtues, which are latent in themselves. But this deep doctrine was understood only by the Bodhisatvas of the highest degree: the rest of the Buddhist Brotherhood (Sravakas\* and Pacceka-Buddhas†) did not, any more than deaf-mutes, understand it. Hence He turned the Wheel of the Law of the Four Noble Truths‡ (which contain elementary teachings), of the Twelve Chains of Causation§, and of the Six Perfections. || And these constitute the Three Vehicles, or means of salvation. But they are imperfect, and their aims and works slight, when compared with the One Vehicle. Hence it is that the Buddha preached the doctrine Vaipulya ¶: in which He criticised and rejected their aims and works, and in which He signally worsted them; comparing them with lepers.

It was the Buddha's earnest purpose to enable the students of

<sup>\*</sup>Sravaka is "he who heard the voice" (of Buddha). The Sravakas are the tyros, constituting the lowest degree of saintship.—Ed.

<sup>†</sup> A Pacceka-Buddha is a Buddha for himself only; it is contrasted with a Sam-mâsam-Buddha, who is universal and a teacher of the world.—Ed.

<sup>‡</sup> The four noble truths are (1) the existence of suffering, (2) the recognition of ignorance as the cause of suffering, (3) the extinction of suffering by the cessation of lust, and (4) the eight paths that lead to the cessation of lust. The eight paths that lead to the cessation of lust are: (1) right understanding, (2) right resolutions, (3) right speech, (4) right acts, (5) the right way of earning a livelihood, (6) right efforts, (7) right meditation, and (8) the right state of mind.—Ed.

<sup>§</sup> The twelve chains of causation (the twelve nidânas) are a formula which describes the concatenation of ignorance, suffering, and the extinction of suffering.—Ed.

<sup>|</sup> Mr. Ashitsu here refers to the six kinds of Abhiññâ or supernatural talents of Buddha which he acquired under the Bodhi tree shortly before he attained enlightenment. These are, (1) The celestial eye which perceives everything. (2) The celestial ear which comprehends every sound. (3) The ability of transformation so as to be everything for everybody. (4) The knowledge of previous states of existence. (5) The faculty of understanding the minds of others. (6) The knowledge of the ends of all things.—Ed.

<sup>¶</sup> The Vaipulya or Mahâvaipulya sûtras, lit. "sûtras of unlimited meaning," contain Mahâyâna doctrines.—Ed.

the Tripitakas\* to follow the One Vehicle, by purging their mind of imperfection and by looking higher and ever higher for ideals.

Therefore, we find in Buddhism a chief doctrine, that of the Mahayana† school, which is not understood by ordinary men, but only by Bodhisatvas, or aspirants for Buddhahood.

We read in the Vimalakirttinirdesa Sutra: "All Sravakas that hear this mysterious law of Moksha‡ (Deliverance), will spontaneously cry out aloud, so as to cause the world to tremble. But the Bodhisatvas will greatly rejoice and gladly accept it."

In this He has mixed the twofold and the threefold doctrine; has confounded the lower and the higher teaching; and has explained the laws anent annihilation. He has taken annihilation in a lower sense and elevated it into a higher; has rejected its partial sense for its full sense; has destroyed its temporal sense for its eternal sense.

For years our Lord, the Buddha, worked at this; and when the hour came that His work was perfected, He put before the world the sure and speedy means of salvation (the "True State of Things"). Hence it is, that men of every kind of disposition (those of the Three Vehicles: Sravakas, Bodhisatvas, and Pacceka-Buddhas, and Tchandhi) are here led into the One Vehicle, the Saddharmapundarika Sutra, (the Lotus-of-the Good-Law Scripture). In short, the Buddha's object was, according to the Saddharmapundarika Sutra, to cause all men to enter into the deep secret of "opening and entering into the wisdom and perception of the Buddha"; and to

<sup>\*</sup> Tripitaka, literally translated, "three baskets," i. e., three collections of books, a name of the Buddhist canon.—Ed.

<sup>†</sup>The Mahâyâna or great doctrine teaches that the attainment of Nirvâna is the complete understanding of truth, while the Hinayâna or small doctrine regards Nirvâna as extinction. The conception of the Mahâyâna in Western Buddhism (in the Lamaism of Thibet) is fantastical and full of apocryphal traditions, while the Buddhism of Japan is, upon the whole, sober.—Ed.

<sup>‡</sup> Moksha is an attitude of mind which is attained by reflexion and concentration of thought. We read in the Outlines of the Maháyána by S. Kuroda, Superintendent of Education of the Jôdo-sect, Tokyo, Japan, 1893, p. 6: "Rising above love and hatred, not seeing friend or enemy, right or wrong, and abiding in the truth even among worldly relations, passing the time peacefully and thus attaining to perfect freedom from all restraints; this is the state of the true Moksha."—ED.

cause them to attain to the unspeakable state of Mahaparinirvana\*; and this, by setting before them, first, the temporal teaching, and then, the eternal.

Let it be understood that the Law which the Buddha perceived innermost, is not communicable by words or signs, but only by thought. And this communication is termed, the "impression of the Buddha's spirit." When a man gets this impression he attains, among other things, to great powers, and becomes active and free. As this thought-transference is common within the Buddhist Brotherhood, whereby the Buddha's spirit is transmitted from teacher to teacher, it has come to pass, that the Buddha-doctrine is exceedingly prosperous among men; that its future is bright; and that it promises to become universal in influence.

The Tripitakas were compiled after the Master's death. But the Tripitaka of the Lesser School is not the same as that of the Greater School. Concerning the compilation of the Scriptures of the Greater School, a work entitled "Gi-rin-sho," gives two versions: (I) that the Hindus compiled them at the same time as they compiled those of the Lesser School, from thought-traditions; and (2) that the Bodhisatva Maitreya and Ananda went together into a valley of Mount Tchakravala, and, according to Chito-sastra, compiled them there.

At this day the Buddhist Brotherhood may be distinguished into three schools: (1) the Southern, which abides in Siam, Burmah, and Ceylon; (2) the Northern, which abides in Tibet, China, Mongolia, and Mantchuria; and (3) the Eastern, which abides in Japan. The Southern school follows the Lesser Doctrine; the Northern is Lamaistic; both exoteric and esoteric; and the Eastern follows the Greater Doctrine.

In the seventh year of the Eirei period, in the reign of the Emperor Ming, of the later Hang dynasty of China (67 A. D.), Buddhism was introduced into China; and thence, in the thirteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Kimmei (552 A. D.), it came into

<sup>\*</sup>Nírvâna, parinirvâna, and mahâparinirvâna have become synonymous terms—Ep.

Japan. The King Sing-Ming of Kurara (in Ancient Korea) presented an image of the Buddha, and some of the sacred books, to the Japanese Court.

In India, far back in time, the Buddha-teaching was diligently propagated by King Asoka, and flourished throughout that Peninsula. About six hundred years after the Buddha, the Bodhisatva Asvaghosha wrote the Mahayana Sraddhatpada Shastra (the "Book on Faith in the Mahayana"); and many great ascetics, like Nagarjuna,\* Deva,† Asamga,‡ and Vasubandhu,§ arose, and the Mahayana school flourished amain. But centuries later, the students of this school were greatly persecuted by the Brahmans; and, later still, the Mohammedans invaded India and rooted out the whole Brotherhood. After the sixteenth century, the teachings of the Greater and Lesser Schools were found only in Bhootan, Kashmir, and Nepal, in the North, and in Ceylon, in the South.

In China the Good Law spread quickest after the later Han dynasty, and became most powerful in the time of the Tang and Sung dynasties. But its influence lessened considerably in the time of the Yuen and Ming dynasties.

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I will now give my readers an outline of Japanese Buddhism, and especially of the spirit of the Mahayana School in Japan. The special doctrines of the Tendai, Jodo, Zen, Shin, Nichiren, Holy Path, and pure Land Schools, I omit, as they may be found in the respective scriptures of these schools.

<sup>\*</sup>Någårjuna, the fourteenth patriarch and author of fifty books, famous for his dialectic abilities; he is said to be the greatest philosopher and subtlest thinker of Buddhism. He taught that the soul is neither existent nor non-existent, neither eternal nor non-eternal, neither annihilated by death nor non-annihilated. His death is given in B. C. 212 or A. D. 194.—Ed.

<sup>†</sup>Deva, the nineteenth patriarch, is the author of nine books and a prominent antagonist of Brahmanism.—Ed.

<sup>‡</sup> Asañgha lived, about 550 A D., in Oude. Strongly influenced by Brahmanism and Sivaism, he became the founder of a new school, called the Yogâtchârga or Tantia school. His works were translated into Chinese 590-616 A. D.—ED.

<sup>§</sup> Vasubandhu, a native of Rajagrika and a disciple of Nâgârjuna, is counted as the twenty-first or twenty-second patriarch Like his master, he taught the Amitâbha doctrine. Amitâbha means ''boundless light.''—ED.

When the Buddhist Scriptures were brought from India to China by scholars who were deeply versed both in doctrine and in linguistic science, they were faithfully translated into the Chinese language; and the emperors of those times encouraged the work by liberal contributions. The translation of the Saddharmapundarika \* Sutra by Kumaragiva† in the Tsing dynasty of the Yo family, and of the Mahapragnaparamita Sutra by Hiouen Tsang, in the Tang dynasty of the Li family, were made by imperial orders; and many of the foremost scholars were commissioned to assist in the work. Thus the emperors reverenced the Sacred Doctrines; and the translations were scholarly and perfect, in harmony with the spirit of the Buddha; and shone like bright jewels in the literary sky.

But, who threw a new light upon the Saddharmapundarika Sutra; who wrote the great commentary and doctrinal exposition of it, and brought before the world its profound secrets? The great teacher Chi-sha of the Tendai school! He fathomed the deep teachings of the Buddha, and gathered them together: a work as great as any ever done. Thus the fulfilment of the Law took place in the Tendai school.

When the Buddha-doctrine began to spread in Japan, the philosopher Den-gio, the founder of the Tendai school on Mount Hiei, began to promulgate the special doctrine of the Tendai (805 A. D.), and thus made known the teachings of the Saddharmapundarika Sutra. Thus he made manifest the sure and quick path of Salvation, and established the Mahayana School in Japan.

Besides this, he concentrated in the Tendai school the "Three Laws of Secrecy" (of the True Word), "Contemplation" (of the Bodhidharma), and the "Moral Precepts" (of the Mahayana); and caused the principles of his school to be widely circulated. Hence it is, that the Tendai school teaches the profoundest truths.

The Buddha-doctrine, ever powerful for good throughout Asia,

<sup>\*</sup> Saddharma means literally "the wonderful law"; pundarika means "the white lotus."—ED.

<sup>†</sup> Kumârajîva, a native of Kharachar, was a great expositor of the Mahâyâna. He was carried a prisoner to China (A D. 383), where he translated many of the sacred books. He is "one of the four suns of Buddhism."—ED.

has now its chief centre on Mount Hiei, the starting-point of Japanese Buddhism: and any commentary or summary of Buddhist doctrine and meditation would be imperfect unless measured by the standard of the school of Mount Hiei. Hence I will set before the reader the Buddha-doctrine according to this school; interspersed with a few remarks of my own. I shall do as the weaver, who mixes warp and woof into one cloth. I shall use the Buddha Sakyamuni's teaching as the warp, and the Tendai's doctrine as the woof, and so produce a beautiful sample of the sacred teachings of the Buddha. My aim shall be to point out the Buddha's wisdom and perception as the secret heritage of all men.

As the first gate of initiation into the genuine Buddha-doctrine, and the degrees of progress therein, are plainly and fully stated in the Tendai scriptures, and in the works on "Secrecy," "Contemplation," and "Moral Precepts," I shall omit them here, and confine myself to the general spirit of it.

The Law of our Lord, the Buddha, is not a natural science or a religion but a doctrine of enlightenment: and the object of it is to give rest to the restless; to point out the Master (the Inmost Man) to those that are blind and do not perceive their Original State.

Without deep meditation and a full understanding of the Doctrine of Enlightenment, no one can attain to onement with the Master within. He that would know the spirit of the Good Law should not idle away his time in books and scriptures, nor fatten upon the thoughts of others, but should meditate upon his own state of life and conduct: closely guard his mind and senses; and learn who, in himself, it is that thinks and feels: this being the key that opens the gate which leads into the Path of Buddha. For he who does not suffer his mind to wander, but closely and incessantly watches himself can, as it were, discover the great Path in his own right hand. He can fathom the nature of true peace of mind, and the very inmost spirit of the Buddha's teaching.

It is then, the first duty of him who would become a Buddhist, to know and perceive the root of the daily phenomena of the senses; and then to compare this knowledge and perception with the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures, the mirrors which reflect his thoughts,

so as to learn the right and wrong. The scriptures will indicate whether the thoughts and phenomena are right or wrong.

O brethren! Open your eyes and look! Why are we here? With the sky above and the earth beneath us? Why do we behold about us the innumerable phenomena of Nature? Are they not the reflex images of our thoughts? Are not we the creators of these things; of the whole? Where is the God-Creator, if not within us?

The six roots (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and thought) meet the six objects (form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and things), and, behold, creation! The eye meets form, and knowledge or perception results: the eye has no self or another principle; the form has nothing that can be taken or rejected; and the knowledge or perception has no birth nor death. Dear reader, think deeply.

O brethren, hearken unto me! These are the voices of the images of our thoughts: sounds of every description: inanimate, animal, human. They are all heard by the action of our Innermost Mind. They are not the work of any extra-human, extra-cosmic god. The ear cannot hear; sound is not harmonious or inharmonious; knowledge or perception is not learned or unlearned. Dear reader, think deeply.

O brethren, inhale the air about you! Is it fragrant or foul? Then, it is your mind that makes it so. No creator, no god makes it so; but your mind. The nose meets an odor, and knowledge or perception results. The nose is neither fragrant nor foul; the odor is neither this nor that; the knowledge or perception is neither transmigration, nor Nirvana. Dear reader, think deeply.

O brethren, consider your tongue. Why does it taste and speak? Does a god make it taste and speak? Are not the taste and the speech the results of the mind? The tongue meets the object, and knowledge or perception is the result. Naturally there is nothing good or bad in the tongue; the object of taste is neither knowledge nor ignorance; and knowledge or perception is neither existence nor non-existence. Dear reader, think deeply.

O brethren, look at your body! Why does it feel? Why does it work? Is it of a god or of the mind? The body meets an object, and the sense of touch arises. The sense of touch arises when the

mind is with the body. The body is neither past nor present; the object of touch is neither present nor future; and there are no temporal names of men and Buddhas. Dear reader, think deeply.

O brethren, consider your thought! Why are there thoughts, imaginings, guessings, and considerings? Are they of a god, or of your mind? When the light of the mind joins the thought, we call that "thinking." When the thought joins external objects, the knowledge of thought or mind arises. Naturally, the thought-root itself does not move nor rest; the external objects are neither good nor bad; and the knowledge of the thought-root is neither just nor unjust. Dear reader, think deeply.

We should not say that the objects about us, be they small or large, are within or without our mind. All living beings about us are equal from eternity, let them differ ever so much in sex, station, and knowledge: not one should be loved or hated above another; and no distinction should be made between self and neighbor. To grasp the fact that the six roots (the five organs of sense and the thought) are at onement with the One Mind, and are, therefore, naught but the One Self-conscious Mind, is the surest way to attain unto the state of Buddhahood.

The actions apparent in the Six Roots are the various lights from the One Mind, and the objects of the Six Roots are Its images. He who is free from every outside state and bond, such as superstition, priest, church, saviour, and god, and who, therefore, enjoys real freedom of mind, is a Great Man, for he has attained unto the wisdom and perception of Buddhahood; he has, to use the words of the Swedish mystic, Swedenborg, "inwardly in himself seen his Divine Being," which is the Buddha in man. And he that aims at the attainment of this onement with that Inmost Mind is called a disciple of the Buddha. But he whose thoughts are not centered for this aim is ignorant. The chief end in view of the Buddha-teaching is the dispersion of the darkness of ignorance and the attainment of enlightenment.

To know the Mind as it is in itself, is to know and understand the secrets of Nature. Ignorance of what the Mind is in itself causes confusion, so that the objects of sense seem to be independent of THE MONIST.

the Mind; and in this way is the understanding of their real nature frustrated. And the attainment of enlightenment, through the dispersion of the darkness of ignorance, is at the same time the knowledge and perception of the Mind as it is: the attainment of universal wisdom.

The Saddharmapundarika Sutra teaches us how to obtain that desirable knowledge of the Mind as it is in itself. Many other scriptures teach the same; but as they are interspersed with various teachings, temporal and eternal, lesser and greater, partial and full, they create confusion, and so fail in the main. The sutras preached before the Saddharmapundarika contain more of the nature of the temporal than of the eternal law. Hence it is said, in the Amitartha Sutra, that the Truth is not yet made manifest during the past forty years. But in the study of the Saddharmapundarika Sutra, the scholar has to rise above the mere literal or exoteric sense, the yellow or red pages; otherwise its spirit will elude him, and he will remain a stranger to its secrets.

All scriptures are images of the One Mind: so that if we take these images for the realities which they represent, we remain forever in the dark; and no matter how soul-stirring and blessing they may be in themselves, they are to us practically inert and unblessing; and not only so, but also positive fetters that impede spiritual progress.

In view of this, it is not to be wondered at that a wise man of old said: "A sage set turning the wheel of the Saddharmapundarika Sutra, but every sciolist that touches it is turned by it."

Mind is the One Reality, and all scriptures are the micrographic photographs of its images. He that fully grasps the Divine Body of Sakyamuni, holds ever, even without the written Sutra, the inner Saddharmapundarika in his hand. He ever reads it mentally, even though he would never read it orally. He is unified with it, though he has no thought about it. He is the true keeper of the Sutra.

Let me here give a brief account of the spirit of the Noble Doctrine, according to the Mahayana scriptures, which the Buddha Sakyamuni, the Nirmanakaya, or Glorified Body, of the incarnate Buddha, that is, the historical, not the doctrinal, Buddha, had in view.

The Buddha Sakyamuni gave us the great Pitaka, which consists of some odd five thousand volumes, and which was given in the course of about fifty years. In this His teaching varies greatly: here it is thus, and there it is thus. "I have," said He, "preached, I now preach, and I shall preach to you the Supreme Doctrine of the Lotus of the Good Law." But, in His last hours, when about to pass into the full Nirvana, he said: "From the dawn of my initiation to the sunset of my Nirvana, I have not preached a word." And why did He say this? If we look at the matter from a mental point of view, oral preaching is not real preaching; the sermon of a whole day equals silence, but a sermon of good deeds may be effective. The Law of Mind is indeed unutterable; it cannot be described by words, try we ever so hard. It eludes our best and strongest efforts. It lacks a mundane name. Our Lord, the Buddha, said: "I have not preached it." And, "It is beyond the sphere of human word, thought, and imagination." To speak of the Law of Mind is like trying to paint the air: as in itself the air is free and void of every obstacle, so is also the Mind. The Mind is free from every hindrance: it is not graspable. And as this is its nature, it naturally is not to be fully expressed.

Now, he that understands the Law of Mind, inexpressible in human language, is styled a Buddha. Nirvana, the Middle Path, and the True State, are other terms that describe his state. He is free, pure, and incomprehensible to the carnal man. He is the Lotus of the Good Law.

The Saddharmapundarika Sutra is the Body of all the Buddhas. Those who abide, walk, and confide in the spirit of this Sutra, who pray the Original Prayer, that is, attain unto enlightenment and deliver others by means of it, are true Saviours. The founders of the various Buddhist schools have been such; and we must follow their virtuous example.

Our true Master, the Lord Buddha, who appeared in this world as a venerable monk, who lived and preached for eighty years, who consumed the dross of this earthly life, and who entered Nirvana, 174 THE MONIST.

has no passion-flame in Him. And he that reveres and obeys this Master and lives in the spirit of the Saddharmapundarika Sutra preached by Him, is a true follower of the Doctrine of Enlighten ment.

The Buddha-life esteems highly both meditation and intelligence, as means of dispersion of confusion and of attainment of enlightenment; but there is no profit in either; peace of mind and onement with life are out of the question, unless we open our Mind and free it from confusion, and perceive in us the Divinity.

As the scriptures were preached by the Buddha in a state of enlightenment, they contain many degrees of teaching, high and low, deep and superficial, adapted to the reader's state of intelligence, or his degree of meditation and comprehension. If a man's mind is in the Path and in harmony with the Buddha's mind, the scriptures seem to be preached by himself, rather than by the Buddha. And though there are many scriptures that represent the minds of men, yet the Saddharmapundarika is the most important.

Many scriptures contain the mental and primary doctrines concerning the attainment of Buddhahood by all men; but none so clearly and perfectly as the Saddharmapundarika: for it points out the way to that attainment in a most concise and sure manner. Now, what is this Sutra? Does it contain merely letters, words, pages, leaves, and covers? Indeed, no! It contains our mind itself. The material sutra of eight volumes is of no earthly use if detached from our mind. Although much esteemed by Buddhists, as containing the seal of the Buddha's mind, still, since fire can consume it, it is not more so than any other scripture. In reading the true Sutra, which bears in itself marks of the Buddha's mind, we may be in the state of the "Lotus of the Good Law," and so in onement with the Buddha Sakyamuni. If we attain to onement with this Buddha, our hope is then perfected and fulfilled. This is our only hope, and we need no other. Therefore, it is just to say, that when we open and unfold our mind, and become enlightened, and attain to the state of the Buddha Sakyamuni, the scriptures are of very little use to us.

If we cling to the literal scriptures, we are evidently in a state

in which the true meaning of the Sutra is foreign to us, and in which confusion and passion fetter us. The sage regards the scriptures as guide-posts toward the Path of Mind; when he has found and entered that Path, he needs them no longer.

It was said of old: "All the Sutras are nothing but fingers that point out the shining moon." When once we see the moon, pointers are no longer necessary. If we adhere to the literal sense of sutras, and their commentaries, and interpretations, we miss the spiritual sense, and we grow old and die in darkness. We are then exoteric disciples of the Buddha, instead of esoteric. Without the spiritual sense we can never understand the Good Law.

It is laudable to count the rosary, wear the yellow robes, and read sutras before images of the Buddha; but this is formal, not essential, discipleship. Essential discipleship requires a perception of the divine meaning of the Buddha, and thought, speech, and action in accordance with it. The disciple must not, in any attitude, be it walking, sitting, or lying down, take his mind from the divine sense of the Buddha. An unswerving adherence to this sense makes him a follower of the Mahayâna doctrine and a true Buddhist.

The Good Law, in its essence, is indeed not easy of comprehension; but earnest aspiration and deep thought lead to the truth.

ZITSUZEN ASHITSU.

HIEISAN, OMI, JAPAN.